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ABSTRACT

Six responsibilities are presented as a basis for formulating a stronger foundation for balanced programming or strengthening the total development process of the United States Department of Agriculture's Extension Education Service. These responsibilities are in the areas of educational service, program balance, effective human relations, problem identification, effective program action, and commitment. (JS)

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THE RESPONSIBILITIES WE HAVE FOR STRENGTHENING EXTENSION PROGRAMS

by

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AC 012 743

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OUTLINE

FOR PRESENTATIONS IN VIRGINIA

INTRODUCTION

I. Responsibility for Educational Service

II. Responsibility for Program Balance

III. Responsibility for Effective Human Relations

IV. Responsibility for Problem Identification

V. Responsibility for Effective Program Action -- Basic Objectives and Rationale

VI. Responsibility for Commitment

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THE RESPONSIBILITY WE HAVE

Introduction

I have interpreted my assignment to be that of providing background, direction, and challenge as a way of thinking about formulating a stronger foundation for balanced programming, or strengthening the total program development process.

I shall refrain from dealing with specifics and details since it is obvious that I am not knowledgeable enough about every aspect of the content to treat the "how" of the field. More specifically, I wish to focus my remarks on thinking about a way of building a conceptual framework useful to Extension personnel in developing a viable and definitive plan of action for meeting the educational needs of people from all segments of society.

I am aware that extension program planning, program implementation, and program evaluation are not new components of extension education. Therefore, I have no illusions that my opinions, ideas, or even facts will provide answers to the future direction of Extension at all levels of operation.

Responsibility for Educational Service

The responsibility of the Extension Service has long been established and re-established. My presentation to you, therefore, is in full knowledge of this fact; and such contribution as we might make together during this conference and in the future will of necessity have to be made within the framework of existing authority of this Act.

The guidelines set forth in 1914 when the Smith-Lever Act was passed creating the Extension Service are just as true today as they were in 1914. The Extension Service was

created on the assumption that whatever people do, they can do better through education. Through education, they can produce better products, build better communities, achieve a richer quality of life, and attain a better satisfaction in doing so.

Extension was also created on the assumption that much intelligence was to be found in the "masses;" and through an informal educational system, opportunities could be provided which would find and release this intelligence. Education, which might be described as "learning for life," must involve the basic institutions of society--the family, the school, the church, the community, and the power structure. Since most people cannot continue in school, school must go out to them.

In describing the responsibility of the early extension agent and the attitude of people toward Extension, Mr. Kirby says:

"It wasn't until the agent knocked on doors, showed them by demonstration--that what he had to offer would work--then he began to gain their confidence. Those agents who were sensitive to people's needs, who were able to understand and see things through the eyes of the farmer and his family, succeeded. Those who were not sensitive, failed.

"The successful agent was one who could -

HELP PEOPLE TO KNOW WHAT THERE IS TO WANT

and

CAUSE PEOPLE TO WANT WHAT HE HAS TO OFFER

"This was and still is the essence of a successful extension educational program. As those "deprived segments" of our early 1900-1920 society began to

have confidence in Extension, they began to request assistance and demand help. They began to tell Extension what they wanted and they desired to be involved in determining what the agent taught.

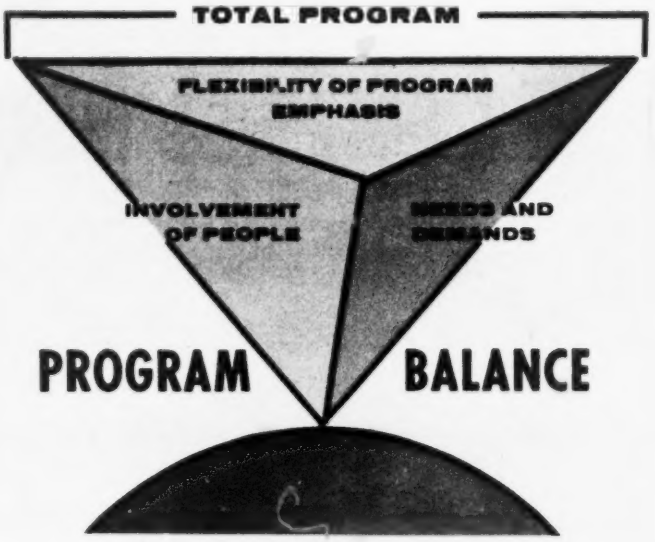
"The demand for assistance became so great, with always limited professional resources, that individual contacts by the agent to the most needy were more difficult and group sessions and mass media methods were developed for those who were most persistent in their demands.

"As a result of these developments, there seems to be a tendency today for 'those who have, get' and 'those who do not have, continue to be deprived.'

"Many will and do say that Extension works with the middle class and ignores those who need it most. Although more than one-third of our time is spent with low-income people, the representatives of the poor people are very vociferous and adamant about this and express their feeling openly, strongly, and often."

Responsibility for Program Balance

We hear much discussion about the need for program balance, or a need to serve all people who come within our legal and moral purview. But how can we recognize program balance? Our observations about it may be superficial and naive unless we know what to look for and can identify what we see.



It seems to me that program balance is a three dimensional concept: (1) Representative involvement of people; (2) Assistance based upon needs and demands; (3) Flexibility of emphasis on various program categories. If Extension workers are to strengthen programs and bring them more in balance, they must have a clear and concise picture of what their present functions are, what their future responsibilities will be, and some idea of how to bridge the gap between these two concepts.

Do our programs reflect needs, problems, opportunities, and priorities of people from all segments of society?

Who determines program priorities?

What criteria or standards are used to determine quality of programs and program balance?

A prevailing assumption seems to be that improvement of program development--planning, implementation, and evaluation--is ipso facto improvement of program balance. This assumption is convenient because changes in these areas are readily measurable by devices at hand.

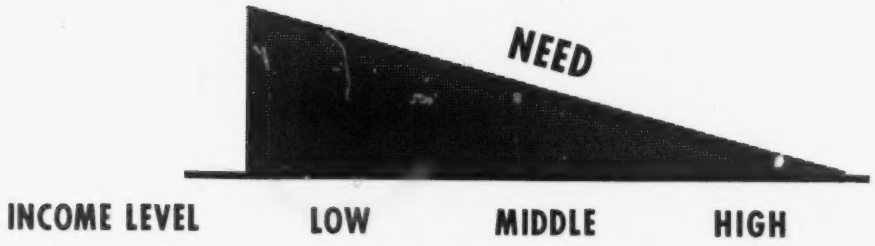
Program balance is more difficult to observe precisely since its nature and quality have not been clearly defined and assessed. It is relatively simple to determine whether steps in the planning process were taken and the order in which they were implemented.

It is important to determine whether apparent program balance considers the well-being of all clientele groups or whether the price of program balance is the adaptive disadvantage of one group or the other.

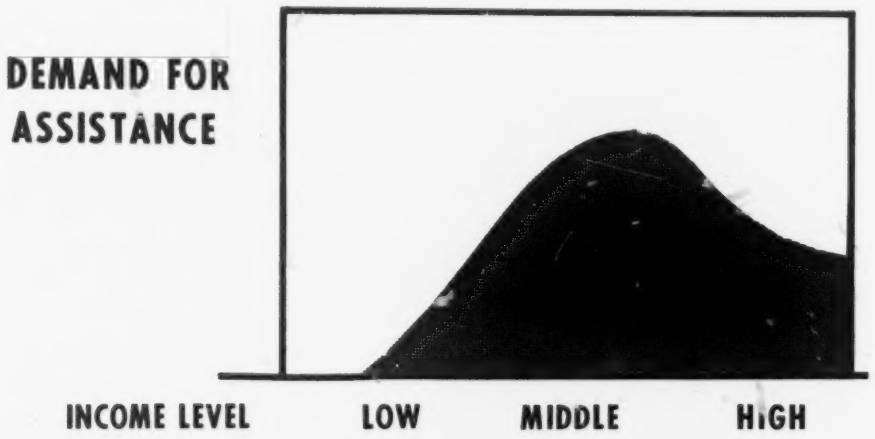
For example, we may need to do more to design programs to meet the needs of people with limited resources as well as those of people with adequate resources, such as commercial farmers and other affluent families. The nature and sophistication of our educational methodologies and strategies require adequate plans of action to meet the needs of people in the various program categories.

The professional staff and representatives from the different interest, racial, ethnic, educational, and socio-economic groups should participate jointly in determining problems, needs, concerns, and priorities. This is the essence of program balance. Let me illustrate:

DEGREE OF ASSISTANCE NEEDED

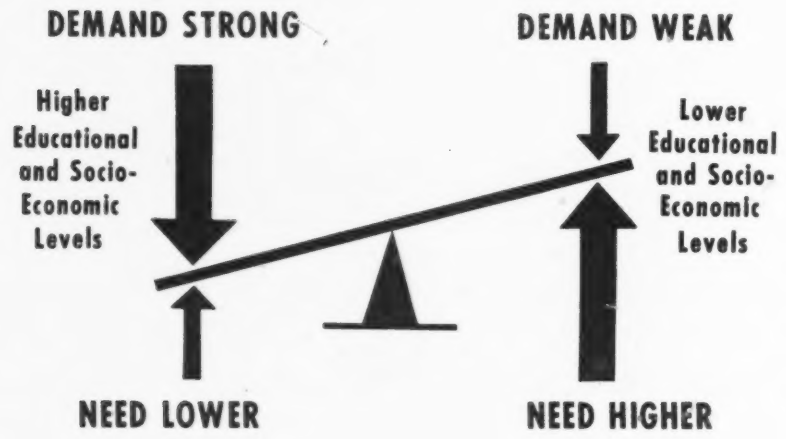


If we look at the demand for assistance to improve levels of income in relation to educational assistance, it would look something like this:



Or, we can illustrate this lack of balance by using other factors as shown here:

PROGRAM OUT OF BALANCE



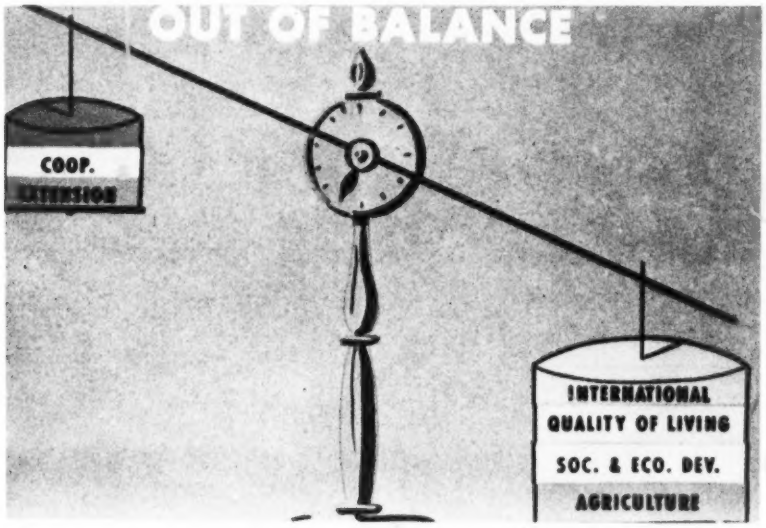
The Joint USDA-NASULGC Committee report, A People and a Spirit, specifies four major areas of need --

- Quality of living
- Social & Economic Development
- Agriculture and Related Industries
- International Extension

MAJOR AREAS OF NEED

The report indicates that in our major program thrusts we need to adjust and expand programs to help those who have fallen behind to move into the mainstream where they have opportunities to contribute and benefit equally.

When we put together those problems and needs that challenge Cooperative Extension--agriculture and related industries; social and economic development; quality of living; quality of the environment; and our international assistance and commitment--we find that the pressing needs of people far outweigh the current capabilities of the Cooperative Extension Service.



Extension's critics have said, in effect, that we (including ES, USDA) have not given sufficient consideration to policies, programs, and goals of society as we formulated, conducted, and evaluated our operations. They have raised pointed questions about Extension's ability to provide equal access and opportunity for all people to participate in its programs.

Certainly we are making progress toward meeting some of the needs and problems. But we have not done enough. Greater progress is needed in program and staff development; and we need to expand and redirect staff efforts to bring Cooperative Extension programs in balance with needs of people.

I think the time has come when our affluent society can no longer think in terms of "economic feasibility" in dealing with social problems. Rather, I believe we must of necessity think in terms of meeting needs and solving problems of society whatever the economic cost--unit cost or total cost.

For example, we usually think of new technologies to reduce production cost and increase output of products without much thought to the impingement on lives of people. I think we should begin closing the "cultural lag" gap that now exists.

Responsibility for Effective Human Relations

I have asked myself: "Can Extension's theories, methodologies, and technologies provide social and economic relevance to problems and needs of people--rural and urban--who come within the scope of Cooperative Extension education?"

If we are managers in an educational agency and we agree that management is leadership, our major responsibility supersedes the spirit of private adventure. It focuses instead on relevant organizational aims, objectives, and goals.

I do not wish to imply that an individual's underlying dreams, wishes, and personal aspirations are repressed. Rather, I mean a mutual task-orientation where the requirements of man and organization mesh, interrelate, and become synergistic. Thus, the energies of staff and organization are pooled for mutual support and advantage.

At the root of our crisis of program balance, in rural and urban areas alike, is weakness in program development and methodology. We cling to the belief that it is possible to meet today's needs and problems with strategies and methodologies of the past. We tend to deal in the past, while individuals, families, groups, and communities wrestle with the problems of a new day and a new era in human development.

You have all heard of the old adage: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

Let me illustrate:

but

"You can put salt in his feed, make him thirsty, so he will want to drink."

This is the essence of Extension education. "Help people to know what there is to want, and to want what we have to offer."

This is what I intend to do for the next few minutes. I hope that you will become sufficiently "thirsty" that you will want to lend all possible assistance in solving the critical issues which face all of us.

Responsibility for Problem Identification

One of the major problems stems from the basic assumption that mass prejudice really exists in the total American society and that people have value orientations and basic beliefs which influence their attitude and behavior patterns.

At the heart of the problem is the lack of understanding by all of us as to the nature and meaning of prejudice; the needs, problems, and desires of people of the various subcultures and their own attitudes and patterns of behavior as they interact with people of different racial, educational, and socio-economic groups. There is a growing consciousness of the need to explore the nature of all inter-cultural relations and devise ways of eliminating social and economic barriers and inhibitions which limit or prevent effective participation. The progress of technology continues to by-pass the really poor; and even today, human dislocation remains extensive in the American society.

I think the situation may be described much like a broken levee during a severe flood. There is great confusion and activity of individuals and groups. Some in boats paddling downstream--going with the current and trying to increase speed. Some frantically trying to paddle upstream--expending great effort and in many cases making little, if any, progress. Some nonchalant, drifting along. A few on roof tops trying to figure what it is all about and where they should go from here.

According to Mr. Kirby, in a recent statement: "One policy is crystal clear to me. As an educational institution and as public employees paid from taxpayers' money, we have an obligation to serve all segments of society within the framework of our responsibilities; and all segments of society must be represented in determining what is the appropriate balance in our educational assistance.

"... The degree to which we have representative people involved in this process will help to determine the nature of balance in our programs."

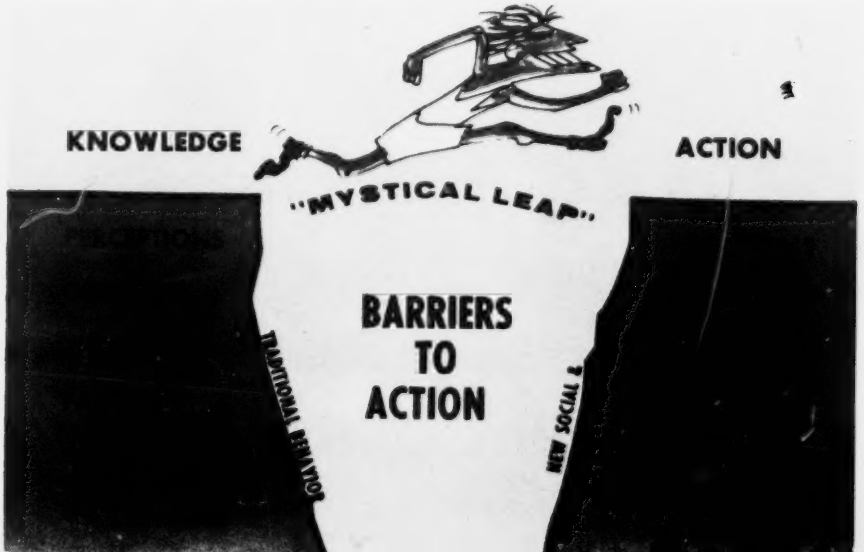
I am sure we all agree with the Administrator that "We cannot be all things to all people. With limited resources and staff, we must of necessity limit the scope of our program assistance." We must deliberately and accurately define the scope of programs to fit the educational needs of the groups we are responsible to serve.

It seems reasonable enough to develop programs, determine program balance, and measure results against obvious needs and problems as viewed by professionals and affluent local leaders. It is eminently sensible, however, to have both the affluent leaders and representatives of the disadvantaged, alienated, and minority groups consider program balance and program development.

The effort to agree on what constitutes the problem situation and effective program development is highly desirable. Our program development processes in general have been good; but they have been much less than what is desired.

Why? Because we fail to take adequately into account the society not now in the mainstream of Extension's program thrusts. The extent to which programs are either in or out of balance stems largely from staff attitudes toward the involvement of people; the identification of needs and response to demands; and the flexibility of emphasis within and among program categories.

Responsibility for Effective Program Action



Over the years, much discussion has been centered on program development processes. We have become ritualistic and learned to recite these, chapter and verse, with a high degree of accuracy; but I doubt that we have been able to take that "mystical leap" and transform program development concepts into practical programs of action that are in balance with the needs of people.

According to Administrator Kirby, "We must make greater progress in program and staff development, in developing and improving new methodologies and strategies, and in expanding and redirecting staff efforts for each of our major program areas. The objective is to bring Cooperative Extension programs in balance with the needs of people from all segments of society."

The basic objectives of this effort are:

1. Analyze conditions and identify problems, inhibitions, and social and economic barriers which tend to limit participation of people.

2. Identify the abilities that need to be improved or developed, attitudes that need to be changed, methodology that needs to be employed to increase participation of people from different cultural, educational, racial, and socio-economic groups.

3. Identify and understand the meaning of prejudices of people in the various subcultures in the American society, and the need to involve them in program development.

Specific objectives will vary from area to area and within areas. Therefore, each State, district, county, and local group will need to identify its problems and decide on priorities and specific objectives.

It seems to me that these questions need to be raised and every effort made to find solutions:

(1) What is the actual situation of the total Cooperative Extension Service at the national, State, district, area, and local levels?

(2) How well does it fit the needs, problems, and desires of people?

(3) What are the gaps, voids, omissions; and why do they exist?

(4) What difference do these make in quality and quantity of service extended to the unserved and the poorly served?

(5) What future plans are outlined to approach the revolutionary changes--social, economic, technological?

(6) What is Extension's role in the massive problems created by the complexity of change?

(7) To what extent are our programs out of balance?

These are basic questions for Cooperative Extension to ask itself and they must be answered satisfactorily. No Cooperative Extension program can be vital and definitive if the base from which it operates is poorly developed and held in question by those for whom the program should serve.

There is much evidence--"A People and a Spirit," "The People Left Behind," OIG audits, and other reports and studies--which reflect the urgency for program action and

program participation, which are relevant to problems and needs of the disadvantaged, alienated, racial and ethnic group members as they themselves perceive them.

Responsibility for Commitment

Finally, a sixth responsibility is one of faith and commitment in what we are, what we can do, and what we will do. This may well be the most serious and significant of all the responsibilities I have listed today. Too long, I think Cooperative Extension has been enamored with the lure of quantity -- how many? how much? what kind or type was used? rather than the "gut" issues of quality, balance, and program development for all segments of society.

The needs and demands for our type leadership in all phases of Cooperative Extension are stronger than we have ever experienced before. This is no time, and Cooperative Extension is no place, for the "half-believer" and for those who are plagued by "anti-intellectualism," "anti-intraceptiveness," and "traditionalism." This is the time for dedication, commitment, and positive action.

As Andre Gide expressed:

> "What another could have done as well as you,
> do not do it.
> What another could have said as well as you,
> do not say it.
> What another could have written as well,
> do not write it.
> Be faithful to that which exists nowhere
> but in yourself,
> and thus make yourself indispensable."

These are the responsibilities as I see them. These are the responsibilities which, if mastered, as I know we shall, will transform the problems of today into opportunities and realizations of tomorrow. These are the responsibilities, if skirted and dodged, will haunt us; but if confronted and conquered, will help to assure the full mental, physical, economic, and social stature of each person who shares in Extension's programs or allows himself to be touched by its spirit.

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